



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Pontfadog C.P. School  
Pontfadog  
Llangollen  
Wrexham  
LL20 7AH**

**Date of inspection: March 2015**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

| <b>Judgement</b>      | <b>What the judgement means</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Excellent</b>      | Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice |
| <b>Good</b>           | Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement   |
| <b>Adequate</b>       | Strengths outweigh areas for improvement                                  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths                        |

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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**Publication date: 08/05/2015**

## Context

Pontfadog C.P.School is a small primary school in the Ceiriog Valley, in the Wrexham local authority, that serves the local rural community. Since February 2012, the school, along with two other schools, has been part of the Dyffryn Ceiriog Federation, under the leadership of one headteacher.

There are currently 21 pupils aged between 3 and 11 years on roll, including five part-time nursery children. They are taught in two mixed-age classes. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. None is eligible to receive free school meals. The school identifies a few pupils as having additional learning needs.

The school's last core inspection was in November 2010.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2012, having previously led one of the other schools in the federation. Both teachers have joined Pontfadog C.P. School during the 2014 to 2015 academic year.

The individual school budget per pupil for Pontfadog C.P. School in 2014-2015 means that the budget is £9,101 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Wrexham is £9,101 and the minimum is £2,820. Pontfadog C.P. School is first out of the 60 primary schools in Wrexham in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>The school's current performance</b>       | <b>Adequate</b> |
| <b>The school's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Adequate</b> |

### Current performance

The school is adequate because:

- Pupils in both key stages make good progress in mathematics and in learning Welsh as a second language
- Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and concentrate well on their tasks
- The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of activities
- Close links with the other schools in the federation broaden pupils' learning opportunities
- Teachers plan and use a suitable range of approaches and resources to stimulate pupils' interest in lessons
- Support staff make a useful contribution to pupils' learning
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is effective

However:

- Standards in reading are too variable
- Across the school, pupils do not make enough progress in developing good writing skills, so their spelling, letter formation and handwriting are not good enough
- Attendance levels are too low
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is weak
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The headteacher leads the school appropriately and promotes the school's vision well
- The school benefits from the wider links across the federation of schools
- The school's self-evaluation procedures are based appropriately on an effective analysis of performance data, regular lesson observations and the outcomes of questionnaires for pupils and parents
- Staff have appropriate opportunities to observe good practice and to attend suitable professional development training courses

However:

- Teachers' roles and responsibilities are not understood clearly
- Leaders do not challenge the school well enough to bring about the necessary

improvements in standards

- Leaders analyse the impact of initiatives satisfactorily but deal largely with aspects of provision

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve pupils' phonic awareness and raise standards in reading
- R2 Improve standards of pupils' writing, including their spelling, punctuation and handwriting, and ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to develop their extended writing skills across the curriculum
- R3 Raise standards in ICT
- R4 Improve levels of attendance
- R5 Raise standards of teaching and, in particular, ensure that teachers expect pupils' work to be of high quality and that this is reflected in their marking
- R6 Ensure that leaders and managers are more rigorous in their monitoring of standards of pupils' work, and provide clear, specific guidance and greater challenge to staff in order to raise standards

### **What happens next?**

'The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.'

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

Across the school most pupils listen well to staff and each other. Many pupils speak clearly and with confidence, for example when explaining the processes they use to solve a problem in mathematics.

Pupils' standards in reading are too variable. Many pupils have standards below the average for their age. In the Foundation Phase, pupils do not make enough progress in developing their sight vocabulary or phonic skills. They are hesitant in decoding words that they do not know. A very few more able readers in key stage 2 read with enthusiasm and good expression. These pupils talk readily about books they like and have a good understanding of characters and storylines. They are increasingly able to skim a passage to gain its meaning and to infer information.

Across the school, pupils do not make enough progress in developing good writing skills. In the Foundation Phase they do not develop appropriate letter formation, spelling or punctuation strategies. In key stage 2, older pupils continue to misspell simple words, do not use punctuation well and their handwriting is immature. Pupils do not always form letters correctly and their presentation is poor. Their work lacks structure. These shortcomings limit pupils' ability to develop good writing skills and to extend their learning. They generally continue to use basic vocabulary and produce very few examples of good quality extended writing.

Foundation Phase pupils use their number skills well, for example to pay for items during role play. They count accurately in twos, double and halve numbers and add numbers up to 20 successfully. Most older pupils can create a tally chart and use the information to make a pictogram effectively. They compare sizes of items and use comparative language, such as bigger or smaller, with confidence.

Most key stage 2 pupils make suitable progress in mathematics. They use their number, measuring and data skills well in lessons. Older more able pupils can, for example, work in number accurately to three decimal places, find a range of averages correctly and find the area and perimeter of irregular shapes.

In both key stages, pupils do not always use their numeracy skills well enough in other lessons such as science or geography, nor is work presented neatly enough. This leads to pupils making errors in calculations.

Pupils use basic word-processing to present their stories and make adequate progress in creating bar charts from a spreadsheet. However, they do not use ICT enough to develop their skills across all aspects of the subject.

Pupils with additional learning needs make steady progress in developing their skills in accordance with their ability.

Almost all pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in learning Welsh as a second language. They are confident in using their growing vocabulary to build sentences orally and play appropriate games to consolidate their skills. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use different tenses and Welsh vocabulary competently in their writing. Pupils in key stage 2 read well, making good use of the vocabulary they know to make sense of the text.

Over recent years, the school has had relatively small numbers of pupils in the year groups at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. This can affect the school's benchmarked performance notably in comparison with that of similar schools.

Pupils' outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase have been variable over time. Their attainment at the expected outcome 5 in literacy and mathematical development has varied, moving the school between the bottom 25% and the top 25% of similar schools.

By the end of key stage 2, over the last four years, all pupils have attained at least the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science. These outcomes are above the average for performance of pupils at other similar schools. Performance at the higher level 5 is variable, and the school ranges between the top 25% and the bottom 25% of similar schools for performance in English, and between the top 25% and higher 50% for performance in mathematics and science.

### **Wellbeing: Adequate**

All pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and well supported by staff. They are confident that staff will take any concerns seriously and act upon them appropriately. They have a good awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and drinking, and take plenty of exercise in the school's spacious grounds.

Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and concentrate well on their tasks. They show care and respect for their peers and work well together. They are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors.

Older pupils take responsibility as officers on the school council and benefit from the opportunity to express their views about the school and with others on the larger joint federation council. The school council plays an active role in arranging fund raising events for charity and the school but has limited impact overall.

Attendance levels have placed the school in the bottom 25% for the last four years when compared with other similar schools. Because numbers in the school are small, the absence of any pupil has a notable impact.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> |
|---|

|                 |
|-----------------|
| <b>Adequate</b> |
|-----------------|

### **Learning experiences: Adequate**

The school's timetable allows pupils appropriate opportunities for learning across the full range of Foundation Phase and National Curriculum subjects as well as religious

education. There are well-developed long and mid-term plans for core subjects and areas of learning that take suitable account of the requirements of the national literacy and numeracy skills framework. Foundation Phase pupils benefit from a good range of outdoor learning activities. Staff have good opportunities to discuss planning with colleagues from across the federation to share their expertise. However, teachers do not always follow schemes of work closely enough when planning lessons, for example in science.

Across the school, provision for ICT is weak. There is little evidence of pupils having regular opportunities to use a range of ICT skills. Planning does not ensure that all aspects of the ICT curriculum are covered, particularly in relation to the use of databases and control technology.

The school has identified weakness in pupils' reading, but strategies to improve standards are not rigorous enough. For example, there is too little focus on developing pupils' phonic skills in the Foundation Phase.

The school uses its links with the other schools in the federation well to provide a broader range of activities for pupils in larger class groups. For example, they share a sports afternoon, forest school activities, and a good range of trips and after-school clubs.

There is appropriate provision for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills and knowledge of the culture of Wales. Pupils begin to develop an understanding sustainable development and the importance of caring for the environment, for example through the work of the Eco council and the good opportunities they have to look after the school garden and to grow vegetables. They begin to develop an understanding of the wider world, for example through their study of life in St Lucia.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

In both classes, working relationships between adults and pupils ensure a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and use a suitable range of approaches to stimulate pupils' interest in the lessons. They deliver lessons at a good pace and use questioning well to stimulate discussion and encourage pupils to think for themselves. Teachers plan lessons carefully and use appropriate resources. Other staff support pupils' learning well and make a useful contribution to pupils' development.

Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils and this impacts on standards that pupils achieve, particularly in literacy. As a result, pupils are not challenged enough, are too easily satisfied with their work and do not strive to improve.

The school has a clear marking policy that focuses on encouragement, and all pupils' work is marked carefully. However, teachers' comments are often too generous and do not explain well enough how pupils can improve their work. Pupils are beginning to develop useful skills in assessing their own and each other's work.



The school collects and analyses a wide range of assessment data that it uses appropriately to set pupils' attainment targets and to monitor their progress. Pupils know their learning targets in subjects but these do not have enough impact on raising standards. For example targets for pupils to improve the presentation of their work have made too little difference.

Reports to parents are detailed and meet statutory requirements. Most parents receive appropriate information about their child's progress during and at the end of the academic year.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school has effective measures to encourage pupils to be healthy and to improve their wellbeing. However, it does not meet the requirements to report to parents on its arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, their spiritual development is enhanced by studies of Judaism and Hinduism, as well as through Bible stories and prayer. Each class displays prominently the class rules created by the pupils and this helps support their moral development. Pupils' cultural development is improved by opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument and by studying events such as the Chinese New Year.

The school liaises well with a range of specialist agencies, for example as the police, health professionals and speech and language teachers. These groups have provided useful support on issues, such as substance misuse.

Provision for pupils with additional needs is effective. There are thorough and effective arrangements for identifying and supporting pupils who have additional learning needs. Pupils' individual education plans are clear and provide helpful guidance for staff, pupils and their parents. These are reviewed and updated regularly. The federation's designated co-ordinator gives clear guidance and appropriate support to staff.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is inclusive and offers equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. It promotes the importance of diversity successfully, and has a very caring, family ethos. There is an effective, supportive atmosphere in the school, with very good working relationships between staff and pupils.

The accommodation is of good quality. Classrooms are large and well maintained. Many colourful and interesting displays help to provide an environment that promotes learning. Toilets are appropriate for the number of pupils and are clean and tidy. The school makes good use of its attractive outdoor areas. For example, Foundation Phase pupils have ready access to a dedicated area for well-resourced learning activities. Overall, resources are plentiful, of a good standard and suitably matched to pupils' needs. However, ICT hardware is not always reliable enough to meet the requirements of staff or pupils.

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> | <b>Adequate</b> |
|--|-----------------|

### **Leadership: Adequate**

The headteacher leads the school appropriately and promotes the school's vision well. She has developed an efficient leadership team from senior staff across the Dyffyn Ceiriog Schools' Federation. This team works together successfully to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school and a worthwhile sense of teamwork is developing well. Although staff have up-to-date job descriptions, the generic nature of these documents means that staff do not receive detailed enough guidance as to their individual roles and responsibilities.

Leaders made suitable use of data to track pupils' outcomes. There are thorough arrangements for the performance management of teachers and appropriate appraisal systems for support staff. These processes link securely to the school improvement plan and provision for staff training.

Although leaders know where the school has shortcomings, they do not consistently have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Therefore they do not challenge staff or pupils to perform as highly as they could.

The school has made valuable progress in introducing the Foundation Phase. Staff plan effective opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subject areas.

Governors are supportive and fulfil their roles suitably. They receive a good range of information from the headteacher that helps them to have a relevant understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. The use of 'learning walks' and visits to the school is in the early stages of development. As a result, governors do not challenge the school well enough to bring about the necessary improvements in standards.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The school's self-evaluation procedures are based appropriately on an effective analysis of performance data, regular lesson observations and the outcomes of questionnaires for pupils and parents. For example, following lesson observations, staff have been provided with Welsh language courses to improve their own skills. A suggestion by a parent led to better security at the school gate.

Currently, the school makes limited use of the scrutiny of pupils' work, particularly in evaluating pupils' standards of achievement. This means that leaders do not identify shortcomings or challenge staff expectations well enough where pupils under-perform in literacy, especially with their spelling, punctuation, handwriting and use of phonic skills. Leaders also miss where the curriculum has not been covered appropriately, such as in science or ICT. Consequently, progress in addressing these shortcomings is slow and this impacts negatively on the standards that pupils achieve.

Priorities in the school improvement plan have realistic timescales and a suitable allocation of resources. Most targets in the plan are measurable in terms of pupils' outcomes. Leaders analyse the impact of initiatives satisfactorily but deal largely with aspects of provision rather than the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has made good progress in several areas. The process of federating with other schools has been completed successfully. The introduction of a pupil tracking system is well established and staff have made progress in improving their planning to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Partnership activities contribute to improving provision for pupils and raising standards of their wellbeing.

The school co-operates effectively with the other schools in the federation and benefits from the opportunities this provides to staff and pupils for sharing planning, ideas and activities. These improve the quality of learning experiences for pupils. Pupils' use of facilities within the federation, for physical education and forest school, promote their wellbeing. The opportunity to take part in sports teams organised through the federation enhances pupils' social development and physical skills. Joint moderation exercises between staff secure consistency and accuracy of end of key stage assessments.

Parents support the school well. The newly formed parent teacher association has already raised funds to improve facilities in the Foundation Phase.

Active links within the community help to enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, they enjoy playing bowls and gardening. Many community members support the school well by attending concerts and fund raising activities. Visits to the village church and visits to the school by clergy support pupils' spiritual development successfully.

The school houses a well-attended local parent and toddler group on a weekly basis. Staff provide a useful range of resources for these children to prepare them for their entry to school.

Transition arrangements to local secondary education are effective in preparing pupils for high school.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The school deploys its teachers effectively. Teachers work well with colleagues from across the federation to plan stimulating activities and experiences for pupils. Support staff make a useful contribution to many aspects of the school's life and work.

Staff have undertaken a worthwhile range of training provided by colleagues and also by external providers. In particular, opportunities to observe senior colleagues from across the federation schools as they teach enable them to reflect well on their own

performance. However, these have not had time to impact significantly on the quality of teaching or on pupils' outcomes. The school's arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time are appropriate.

The school is involved suitably, along with its family of schools, in a project to raise standards of numeracy. However, this is still at an early stage of development and has yet to have a notable impact on the standards that pupils achieve.

The headteacher and the governing body manage the school budget effectively to meet the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan. Pupils benefit from a wide range of suitable learning resources. The school does not currently receive any funding from the Pupil Deprivation Grant.

In view of the standards that pupils achieve and the shortcomings in teaching, provision and leadership, the school provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1: Commentary on performance data

There are very small cohorts in many of the years of Foundation Phase and key stage 2 performance data available for this school. Where this is the case, we do not include tables of performance data.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.

<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/index.html?lang=eng>

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

The number of responses received was fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received was fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mrs Rosemary Lait              | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Peter Duncan Haworth        | Lay Inspector       |
| Mr Richard Hawkley             | Team Inspector      |
| Mrs Olwan Corben (Headteacher) | Nominee             |

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

|      |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |       |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Year | N   | R   | Y1  | Y2  | Y3  | Y4  | Y5   | Y6    |
| Ages | 3-4 | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | 7-8 | 8-9 | 9-10 | 10-11 |

Secondary phase:

|      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Year | Y7    | Y8    | Y9    | Y10   | Y11   | Y12   | Y13   |
| Ages | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 | 15-16 | 16-17 | 17-18 |

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

|                  |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Foundation Phase | Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 |
| Key stage 2      | Year 3 to Year 6                      |
| Key stage 3      | Year 7 to Year 9                      |
| Key stage 4      | Year 10 and Year 11                   |

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.